

George Bush, Tony Blair and the Case for the Armed Intervention in Iraq

The US and British governments insisted that one of the main reasons for military intervention was that Iraq had “weapons of mass destruction”. On 16 October 2002, the US Congress issued a joint resolution entitled “Authorization for use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002”. The joint resolution says,

The efforts of international inspectors, United States intelligence agencies, and Iraqi defectors led to the discovery that Iraq had large stockpiles of chemical weapons and a large scale biological program, and that Iraq had an advanced nuclear weapons development program that was much closer to producing a nuclear weapon.

Another statement says that “the current Iraqi regime has demonstrated its capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction against other nations and its own people”. In the same month, the US government issued *Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs* which included subtitles such as “Nuclear Weapons Program”, “Chemical Warfare Programs”, “Biological Warfare Program”, “Ballistic Missile Program”.

In Britain, the British government issued a dossier entitled *Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government* on 24 September 2002. In the dossier’s “Foreword”, Tony Blair says, “I have been increasingly alarmed by the evidence from inside Iraq that despite sanctions, despite the damage done to his capability in the past, despite the UN Security Council Resolutions expressly outlawing it, and despite his denials, Saddam Hussein is continuing to develop WMD”. Blair continues to say that “Saddam has continued to produce chemical and biological weapons”, and “he continues in his efforts to develop nuclear weapons”.

The US and British governments are aware of the fact that many states have “weapons of mass destruction”, but what makes Iraq a special case is that the Iraqi regime would employ weapons of mass destruction “to launch a surprise attack against the United States or its Armed Forces”. On 9 October 2002, *The New York Times* published a letter (dated 7 October 2002) from George J. Tenet, director of the CIA, to Senator Bob Graham, chairman of the Intelligence Committee, saying that “Baghdad for now appears to be drawing a line short of conducting terrorist attacks with conventional or C. B. W. against the United States”. In Britain, Tony Blair asserted that Saddam’s “military planning allows

for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them”.

It is noticeable that although Iraq submitted the declaration required under paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1441 on 7 December 2002, and that Hans Blix, head of UNMOVIC, submitted a report to UN Security Council on the course of inspections and Iraqi cooperation on 27 January 2003, US Secretary of State Colin Powell submitted on 5 February 2003 a presentation before the UN Security Council entitled “Iraq: Failing to Disarm”.

The US and British governments raised an ethical issue when they talked about the violation of human rights and the oppression of Iraqi people by Saddam Hussein’s regime. On 16 October 2002, the US Congress declared that Iraq continued “to engage in brutal repression of its civilian population”. In his address to the UN on 12 September 2002, George Bush said that “the U.N. Commission on Human Rights found that Iraq continues to commit extremely grave violations of human rights, and that the regime’s repression is all pervasive. Tens of thousands of political opponents and ordinary citizens have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, summary execution, and torture by beating and burning, electric shock, starvation, mutilation, and rape. Wives are tortured in front of their husbands, children in the presence of their parents -- and all of these horrors concealed from the world by the apparatus of a totalitarian state”. In Britain, the British government declared that “Saddam practises torture, execution and other forms of coercion against his enemies, real or suspected”. It also affirmed that “Human rights abuses continue within Iraq. People continue to be arrested and detained of suspicion of political or religious activities”.

Moreover, the US and British governments argued that military intervention was the only way to bring democracy to Iraq. The US Congress declared that “it should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove from power the current Iraqi regime and promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime”. It is, however, not possible to know how democracy can be imposed on a people by foreign military force.

The Iraqi regime was accused of having connections with terrorist groups especially al-Qaeda. The CIA director George J. Tenent says, “we have solid evidence of the presence in Iraq of Al Qaeda members, including some that have been in Baghdad”. He also says that “Iraq has provided training to Al Qaeda members in the areas of poisons and gases and making conventional bombs”. On 16 October 2002, the US Congress claimed that “members of al-Qaida, an organization bearing responsibility for attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, are known to be in Iraq”.

Not only that, but “Iraq continues to aid and harbour other international terrorist organizations, including organizations that threaten the lives and safety of United States citizens”. On 30 January 2003, the US Vice President Dick Cheney asserted that Saddam Hussein’s “regime aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda. He could decide secretly to provide weapons of mass destruction to terrorists for use against us. And as the President said on Tuesday night, it would take just one vial, one canister, one crate to bring a day of horror to our nation unlike any we have ever known”.

Because of political pressures from countries such as France, Russia and Germany and local anti-war reactions, the US and British governments were keen to legitimise their military action by referring to UN resolutions and showing Iraq’s violation of these resolutions. For instance, the US Congress announced that the “United Nations Security Council Resolution 678 (1990) authorizes the use of all necessary means to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 660 (1990) and subsequent relevant resolutions”. It seems that the Congress is unaware of the fact the UN resolutions did not authorise a particular country such as the US “to enforce” UN resolutions.

It should be recalled here that following high level negotiations between Iraq and the United Nations throughout spring and summer 2002, and against a background of the US and Britain insisting on the war option, Iraq finally agreed that it was willing to readmit weapons inspectors in September. Throughout October, the UN Security Council wrestled with the issue finally adopting UN Security Council Resolution 1441 unanimously on 8 November 2002. Resolution 1441 states that “Iraq has been and remains in material breach of its obligations under relevant resolutions”. It offered Iraq a “final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations” and sets up “an enhanced inspection regime with the aim of bringing to full and verified completion the disarmament process”. The resolution also directed ‘the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC and the Director-General of the IAEA to report immediately to the Council any interference by Iraq with inspection activities, as well as any failure by Iraq to comply with its disarmament obligations”, and recalled “that the Council has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations”.

It is noticeable that both George Bush and Tony Blair used phrases such as “good and evil” when they described their determination to confront Iraq. It seems therefore that an ideology of proclaimed “righteousness” had played a major role in political propaganda as well as in paving the way for war against Iraq. The war on Iraq was described as a war between good and evil, between love and hatred, between justice

and injustice, between freedom and oppression, between the “civilised world” and the “uncivilised world”. This is especially true in the United States. Since his State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002 when he talked about the “axis of evil”, (i.e. North Korea, Iran and Iraq), George Bush continued to affirm his “good crusade” in the world. On 1 June 2002, Bush said, “Our Nation’s cause has always been larger than our Nation’s defence. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace – a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants”. He also said, “We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name”. On 17 September 2002, the White House issued *The National Security of the United States of America* which affirms that “the United States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere”.

Although Iraq has been ruined and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi have died as a result of the military attacks and economic sanctions that the US, Britain and their allies have imposed since 1991, Iraq was perceived as an eminent threat to the US, Britain and the whole world. Saddam Hussein’s regime was undoubtedly tyrannical, but it is not difficult to see how Iraq was used as an example for establishing the right of pre-emptive strike at any country thought to threaten US and British interests.

There are many countries that possess “weapons of mass destruction”, but Iraq was targeted because of oil, big business and imperialism. Iraq has never used “weapons of mass destruction” against Europe or the US; rather, Iraq was supported by the US and Britain when it waged (biological and chemical) war against Iran in 1980s. On the other hand, it is known that the US and Britain are allied with undemocratic regimes such as the Gulf States (including Saudi Arabia), Egypt and Morocco.

The year 2004 witnessed interesting development related to the war on Iraq. Special inquiry committees in the US and Britain accused the US and British governments of intelligence failure and information distortion. Members of the US Congress and the British Parliament accused their respective governments of “trying to mislead the public” about Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction”.

The consequences of the war on Iraq have proved to be devastating, whether to the Iraqi people, the US or to the relationship with the “Muslim world”. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed and wounded and thousands of US troops have been injured and killed. Neither the Iraqis gained liberty and peace, nor the “coalition” states achieved security. Not to mention that terrorist attacks have increased

whether inside or outside Iraq. Therefore, there is an urgent need for humans to solve their problems by peaceful means.

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- *Published in 2004*